

THE ARTSPARKS ANGLE



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Welcome Message

We are happy to present the latest edition of '**The ArtSparks Angle**', Professional Learning Program Newsletter. In the Champions of Art Education series, we feature one of the powerful and cogent voices in educational philosophy, Maxine Greene. We also have Shalaka Deshmukh, one of our EdSparks Collective cohort members, narrating her experience of participating in EdSparks Collective program and conducting robust art-based interventions with the children.

Champions of Art Education: Maxine Greene



Photo Credit: Teachers College, Columbia University

In this article, we celebrate the late and great Maxine Greene, an educational philosopher, author, teacher, and one of the powerful voices in art education. She was a professor of Philosophy and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. Her writings and teachings have greatly impacted the field of aesthetic education. Greene is well known for her inspiring talks and has lectured widely at universities and educational associations nationwide. During her lifetime, she had also led several scholarly societies and associations.

Throughout her nearly 50 years at Teachers College, Columbia University, Greene made some powerful arguments in favor of the arts. She had always been very vocal of art programs being trivialized or excluded from public schools. The arts in general are associated with creativity and many educators assume that the process of making art merely engages one's emotions and feelings. But, Greene argued that arts in education could provide deeper learning experiences and a way of making sense of the world. Engagements with the arts may help individuals to discover openings in their own experiences, become more aware of one's self and surroundings and make a new beginning. According to Greene, education should move away from traditional practices in order to develop individuals capacity to surpass the given and to look at things if they could be otherwise.

In one of her books *Releasing the Imagination*, she writes about the power of the arts to instill our capacity to imagine possibilities beyond the here and now. Especially in times of war and strife, or a global pandemic, people's capacity to think beyond the crisis to what the future could look like is essential. Without imagination, we lose the ability to question our realities and enter alternate realities, to bring an 'as if' into being, and to look at things as if they could be otherwise. The arts in education provide opportunities for children to imagine possibilities that exist beyond what we see in front of us.

Greene also argues that the arts help us connect to the human condition beyond impersonal numbers, and moves us to action. She encourages people to stay wide-awake, actively perceive the world as they experience it and be equipped to pose meaningful questions and potentially enact change. According to Greene, "*Wide-awakeness frees us to see more--the grass, the trees, the city streets, the abandoned ones, the homeless ones, the broken windows, what is absent, what is realized. To be enabled to activate the imagination is to discover not only possibility, but to find the gaps, the empty spaces that require filling as we move from the is to the might be, to the should be. To release the imagination too is to release the power of empathy, to become more present to those around, perhaps to care.*" (2007, p. 4)

Spotlight: Story From the Field

It gives us great pleasure to showcase Shalaka Deshmukh, our EdSparks Collective (2020-21) participant, in this section. This excerpt includes Shalaka's experience of participating in EdSparks Collective and conducting Action Learning Project (ALP) as part of the program.

I still remember my first day in EdSparks Collective. "What new things can be here for me?", "I have always tried innovative ways in my art class as a teacher", "As an art student, I was not only aware of the different art materials but also have handled them in various ways". These were some of the thoughts running through my mind throughout the first day. But, at the end of the day I realized that until I kept aside my bundle of experience as an art student, a teacher and trainer, I will not be able to learn new things. From next day onwards, I decided to follow this and started enjoying the whole experience. I was totally immersed in the process of exploration. As days passed, I started understanding the missing components in my art education when I was a student. The process, scaffolding, etc. were never taught. I realized this gap through EdSparks. I enjoyed the 12 days program not only because of the activities but also experienced a robust learning process.

This understanding reflected for the first time during my ALP, when I conducted sessions for preschoolers. I never even dreamt that 5 year old children could sit for one and a half hours for the activity. I had this experience for all six days. This was because the lesson planning was perfectly sequential, a lot of scope for exploration and creativity, complete freedom for putting their ideas on paper, and yet there was scaffolding wherever it was needed. The children not only got engaged with the material but

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were also learning new things on their own everyday. It was the 'process' that was teaching them. Five year old kids learnt how to cut a circle out of a paper without drawing, they learnt how to hold a paper so that it will stand. Older children pushed themselves to complete the work. As a facilitator I thoroughly enjoyed the whole process. It was a very satisfactory experience.

Most interesting though challenging part that I found was planning a new 'unit outline'. This was taught in our second part of training. Currently, I have started working on it for the planning of the upcoming academic year. It is not an easy task to make an interesting yet 'robust' theme which will allow children to think and create their own art work. I realized that avoiding replication is a challenge and some of my past activities given to the students, more or less were replication, besides I always tried for an interesting component. So now I am thinking how can I convert just an interesting theme into a robust theme? I also realized that its important to integrate freedom with an appropriate challenge. Experience, knowledge, nothing can be taken for granted. For every new plan you have to start with a new thought process and I am enjoying it. Now I'm just waiting for children to come back to school.



Upcoming Event

ArtSpeaks Session



Making Learning Visible in the Visual Arts

25th June 2021

4:30 pm - 5:30 pm (IST)

How can the nature of learning as a process be made visible, and in a way that serves the children as much as those around them? How can we make learning in the art classrooms visible to parents and school administrators?

Join us for an interactive discussion, where we explore different ways to make visible both what and how children learn in the visual arts.

To register for the session, please click here: <https://forms.gle/qyfq6bK4yvyz4yjgn8>

"Every great artist gives birth to a new universe, in which the familiar things look the way they have never before looked to anyone." —Rudolf Arnheim